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SUBJECT: PARTY POLITICS, PERSONAL LOYALTY KEY IN CABINET
RESHUFFLE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAVID M. ROBINSON FOR REASON 1.4(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: President Jagdeo's new cabinet, sworn in September 9, showcases a cadre of up-and-coming, Moscow-educated party leaders with close personal ties to the President. While this cabinet also confirms the ascendancy of the more venal Janet Jagan faction of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) over the late Cheddi Jagan's idealist following, many of the appointees owe their loyalty directly to Jagdeo, rather than to Mrs. Jagan. Party outsiders and technocrats are few, and while Jagdeo did trim some deadwood, several aging and incompetent ministers linger.

PARTY FAITHFUL REWARDED AND RECYCLED

12. (C) Seven ministers retained their posts:

--Prime Minister Samuel Hinds is the former head of the now-defunct CIVIC movement, which merged with the PPP in 1992 as Hinds first became Prime Minister on Cheddi Jagan's ticket. He is a weak figurehead, tapped primarily for his Afro-Guyanese ethnicity and his docility. According to Hinds' family and staff, he is looking to get out and would like to be High Commissioner to Canada.

--Dr. Roger Luncheon, a pivotal member of the PPP's politburo-style Executive Committee, will stay on as Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Secretary to the Cabinet, and Secretary to the Defense Board. He serves as Jagdeo's

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gatekeeper, strategist, and primary military/security coordinator.

--Dr. Rudy Insanally was reappointed Minister of Foreign Affairs as one of four technocrat ministers. Despite his advanced age and increasing ill health, he will also continue to juggle his two other jobs as Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN)-a position he has held since 1985-and non-voting member of the National Assembly. Insanally has a long diplomatic career behind him and a good reputation in UN circles.

--Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, an accomplished U.S.-educated biochemist, will continue as Minister of Health. Ramsammy told Emboffs that he would also take over the duties of

former Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Reepu Persaud, considerably enlarging his profile. Ramsammy reputedly raised a significant share of the PPP's 2006 campaign war chest. His wife and children live in the U.S. and Ramsammy himself is a U.S. citizen.

--Dr. Jennifer Westford will retain her post as Minister of Public Service. Webster studied medicine in Cuba, and holds degrees in International Relations from the University of Guyana and the University of Canterbury.

--Doodnauth Singh will stay on as Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, defying rumors that he was on the way out due to old age and loss of favor. National Assembly Speaker Ralph Ramkarran and Chief Justice Carl Singh told EmbOffs that Doodnauth was retained because there was nobody else to appoint. He is a successful criminal attorney and the former Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). Doodnauth is a technocrat and does not enjoy a close relationship with Jagdeo or the PPP.

--Carolyn Rodrigues was renewed as Minister of Amerindian Affairs. She has a reputation for efficiency, and was instrumental in pushing through the 2006 reforms to the Amerindian Act over the objections of several Amerindian groups. The PPP campaigned hard for the growing Amerindian vote in the 2006 election, suggesting that Rodrigues' profile may rise.

¶3. (C) Five cabinet members were assigned new ministries:

--Manzoor Nadir, leader of the minor party The United Force (TUF) took over as Minister of Labour. As Minister of Tourism, Commerce, and Industry, the impoverished Nadir mysteriously became well off. He is Jagdeo's only cross-party appointee.

--Clement Rohee, previously Minister of Foreign Trade, was moved to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Rohee is a PPP Executive Committee member, and stays in the cabinet because of his loyalty to Janet Jagan, who reportedly fought hard with Jagdeo for his inclusion. Rohee is known for unwillingness to delegate or accept advice, and has been skewered in the local media for his mishandling of the foreign affairs portfolio (Previous EmbOffs have shared this opinion-see 94 Georgetown 03220 for a particularly vivid description of Rohee's incompetence). While his appointment to Home Affairs was surprising, party stalwarts have traditionally occupied this post, and Jagdeo may be trying to keep the Ministry-which oversees the Guyana Police Force and domestic intelligence activities-under close watch.

--Harry Narine Nawbatt, the former Minister of Transport, became Minister of Housing and Water. He is a longtime teacher and civil servant.

--Dr. Henry Jeffrey, formerly Minister of Education, was named Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation. Jeffrey, who came in via CIVIC, holds several U.K. academic degrees, including a doctorate in management philosophy. He served as a researcher and director of the Kuru-Kuru Cooperative College under Burnham's People's National Congress (PNC) administration, but was fired for writing a book that criticized PNC policies. A minister since 1992, Jeffrey has not proven terribly effective in any of his assignments.

--Shaik Baksh, the former Minister of Housing and Water, is now Minister of Education. He has sat for the PPP in the National Assembly since 1992. Rumors of corruption associated with the allocation of house lots during his tenure as Minister of Housing circulate widely, including among PPP insiders.

¶4. (C) The remaining ten ministries were doled out primarily to PPP insiders and Jagdeo's confidantes:

--Dr. Ashni Singh, former Director of the Budget Office, was

tapped as the new Minister of Finance. Singh was awarded the prestigious Chevening Scholarship to study in the U.K., and holds a Ph.D. in Accounting and Finance. He is widely regarded as competent. However, Jagdeo-a former Finance Minister himself-has previously run financial policy directly out of his own office, and may not allow Singh much autonomy.

--Robeson Benn, head of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), was named Minister of Transport and Hydraulics. Benn is a geologist by trade, educated in Germany and Canada. He is a capable administrator with rumored Prime Ministerial ambitions-his appointment to the Transport Ministry puts him in direct, daily contact with Hinds.

--Robert Persaud was appointed Minister of Agriculture, taking up the post previously held by the assassinated Satyadeow Sawh. Persaud will also assume responsibility for Fisheries, Crops, and Livestock, formerly a separate portfolio, thus increasing his clout. As the President's Information Liaison and the Head of the Government Information Agency (GINA), Persaud ran the PPP propaganda machine. He is a PPP Executive Committee member and whispers have him tagged as a possible 2011 presidential candidate. He is seen as the President's personal "spin doctor," and took over the editorship of the PPP party newspaper, The Mirror, from Janet Jagan. He is reportedly Jagdeo's nephew-in-law.

--Priya Manickchand, an attorney and legal consultant to Jagdeo, was named Minister of Human Services and Social Security, taking over from a discredited Bibi Shadick. Her portfolio is expected to include Trafficking in Persons issues. Manickchand has worked for the Georgetown Legal Aid Clinic, a USAID-funded initiative. There are quiet rumors that she is romantically involved with Jagdeo.

--Manniram Prashad, a businessman and former presidential advisor on investment matters, will be Minister of Tourism, Industry, and Commerce. Prashad owned a struggling travel and eco-tourism agency and has served as President of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Private

Sector Commission (PSC). He advocates foreign direct investment, though as Investment Advisor to the President he was widely suspected of benefiting personally from government contracts and foreign investment concessions.

--Dr. Frank Anthony, a PPP fixture and advisor to the president since 1992, was named Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport. With the Cricket World Cup coming up, this will be a crucial portfolio. Anthony, educated in Jerusalem and Moscow, serves as first secretary of the PPP's youth arm, the Progressive Youth Organization (PYO), and is rumored to be a possible 2011 presidential candidate. As Executive Director of the Health Sector Development Unit in the Ministry of Health, he has worked cooperatively with U.S. Embassy and PEPFAR staff on several occasions. Anthony also serves as deputy chairman of the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), charged with monitoring and reducing ethnic tensions between Guyana's major racial groups.

--Moscow-educated Kellawan Lall, a member of the PPP Executive Committee and political advisor to the President, will serve as Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. Lall reportedly began his political career as a yard boy in the PPP's Berbice office, and was brought up the party ladder by Janet Jagan.

¶5. (C) Jagdeo named three appointees as Ministers within a Ministry, i.e. Junior Ministers:

--Jennifer Webster, former permanent secretary in the Office of the President, was named Minister within the Ministry of Finance. She studied economics in Canada and is a professional accountant.

--Dr. Bheri Ramsaran will be Minister in the Ministry of Health. Ramsaran, a Russian-educated medical doctor, is a former member of the PPP Executive Committee. He was previously Director of Regional Health, and incoming Minister of Health Ramsammy told EmbOffs that Ramsaran would continue to oversee delivery of health services to outlying areas, while also managing Cuban-Guyanese cooperation in health matters. While Ramsammy is not known for sharing the limelight, he appears to trust Ramsaran.

--Dr. Desrey Fox, a museum curator and U.S.-educated linguist, will be Minister in the Ministry of Education. She is thought to be a possible candidate for Prime Minister.

TWO FROM OLD GUARD MISS THE CUT

¶6. (C) Two notable absences:

--Moses Nagamootoo, the former Information Minister and PPP stalwart, was not named to the cabinet. He had an acrimonious falling out with the party over its involvement with phantom death squads in 2004, and Jagdeo asked him back into the fold only a few months before elections. Nagamootoo told EmbOffs that he had requested Home Affairs or Foreign Affairs, and that Jagdeo had offered him an advisory position or a foreign posting instead. He declined the overseas assignment and has not decided whether to take an advisory position.

--Gail Teixeira, former Minister of Home Affairs and in the cabinet since 1992, did not retain a ministerial position. She had told several members of the international community before the elections that she did not want a cabinet position and had her eye on High Commissioner to Canada. Jagdeo said that Teixeira, a PPP Executive Committee member, would continue to work in the Office of the President and would chair a committee on governance issues.

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) Outraged letters to the editor bemoaned Jagdeo's failure to reach out across party lines, but it was unrealistic to expect him to bestow any ministerial positions on his People's National Congress (PNC) archrivals after winning in a landslide. The grumblers never acknowledge that Jagdeo's cabinet—which roughly mirrors Guyana's diverse ethnic makeup—is 30% Afro-Guyanese. Although Jagdeo has committed to a vague "enhanced framework for inter-party cooperation," he has never answered PNC leader Robert Corbin's call for "shared and inclusive" governance. With an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the PPP has no reason to share its victory spoils.

¶8. (SBU) Guyana's political future will depend on whether Jagdeo demands honesty and real governance reforms from his ministers—or just political fidelity. As the U.S. and the international community push for post-election change, Jagdeo and the PPP government will have little incentive to overhaul the system they so effectively control.

Robinson